GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:43
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2001
FIRE IN ORDNANCE DEPOTS
BRIJBHUSHAN SHARAN SINGH;C. SREENIVAASAN

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of unprecedented increase in the incidents of fire in Army ordnance depots;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the quantum of ammunition destroyed and loss of lives and property alongwith the value thereof in each case during the last three years, separately;

(c) whether the Government have conducted any inquiry into each incident separately;

(d) if so, the details of the findings of each inquiry;

(e) the action taken thereon and the extent to which affected civilians have been compensated by the Government; and

(f) the concrete measures taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to avoid recurrence of such incidents in future and to safeguard the interests of civilians?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH)

(a) to (f): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (f) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.43 FOR 25.7.2001.

There were six incidents of fire in Army Ordnance Depots in the last three years. Details of loss of life, preliminary estimates, pending conclusion of enquiries, of loss of equipments, ammunition, and cost estimates in these incidents are given in the table below :-

S. No.	Name of Unit	Date of Occurrence	Loss of Life	Loss of Ammuniton (cost)	Civil Property
(a)	Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur	28 April 2000	02 (villagers) and 07 persons injured.	Rs.393 crores (Approx) to Rs.70 Lacs	Loss of property amounts
(b)	Amminition Depot, Dehu Road	03 May 2000	Nil	Nil	Nil
(c)	Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur	28 May 2000	Nil	Rs.4 crores (cloth and equipment)	Nil
(d)	2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 FAD), Pathankot.	29th April 2001	Nil	Rs.27.69 crores	Nil

(e)	2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 FAD), Birdhwal (Ganganagar)	24 May 2001	01 (Military)	Rs.378 crores (Approx)	Nil
(f)	Ordnance Depot, Shakurbasti, New Delhi	3 June 2001	Nil	Rs.2.68 crores (Approx)	Nil

Courts Of Inquiry in respect of Ammunition Depot Bharatpur, Ammunition Depot, Dehu Road, Central Ordnance Depot Kanpur and 2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 Field Ammunition Depot), Pathankot have been completed. Courts of Inquiry in respect of 2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 Field Ammunition Depot), Birdhwal (Ganganagar), and Ordnance Depot Shakurbasti are in progress.

2. Details of the findings of the concluded Courts of Inquiry are as under:-

(i) Ammunition Depot (AD), Bharatpur (28 April, 2000) .

The fire incident took place on 28.4.2000. In this loss has been estimated at Rs.393 crores. The likely cause was due to short circuit / sparking on pole No.4 near Guard Post No.11. It has, however, not been possible to confirm this through specific, direct evidence. Administrative action has, however, been initiated against the default of neglect.

ii) Ammunition Depot, Dehu Road (3rd May,2000).

This was an incident of grass fire caused by high temperatures and spread by strong winds.

iii) Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur (28th May,2000).

The cause of fire, in this incident could not be conclusively established. The possibility of sabotage / arson, though not established, has not been ruled out. The inquiry report has recommended administrative corrective action.

iv) 2 Ammunition Sub Depot, 18 Field Ammunition Depot, Pathankot (29th April, 2001).

In the absence of sufficient proof the Court of Inquiry has not been able to conclusively establish the cause. A probable cause could be carelessness in regard to use of cigarette/match stick. The Court of Inquiry has also not ruled out sabotage. Security and fire fighting capability have been strengthened in these Depots, as recommended by the various Courts of Inquiry.

3. As regards payment of compensation to civilians affected in the fire accident that occurred on 28th April,2000, in Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur, based on details received from the Government of Rajasthan, the Ministry of Defence have ordered the payment of an amount of Rs.2 lakhs each to the families of those two persons who died in the fire accident, and an amount of Rs.1 lakh to compensate the seven persons injured.

4. The following steps have been taken to prevent occurrence of such fires in Ordnance and Ammunition depots in the future :-

i) All depots have been directed to update safety and security instructions.
ii) All depots have been inspected by a Board of Officers to check adequacy of safety and security arrangements.
iii) Shortage in fire fighting equipments are being made up and defective equipment repaired.
iv) Unserviceable ammunition is being disposed off on priority.
v) Allotment of additional funds for creation of more storage accommodation & for shifting ammunition presently stored on open plinths under canvas to explosive store houses is being made.